

Central Valley Ag Tour 2006

Hosted by Congressman Devin Nunes

May 31, 2006

Welcome to the Nunes ag tour

Thank you for being a part of my third annual Central Valley Ag Tour of the 21st Congressional District. You will quickly find that this day will be time well spent in becoming better acquainted with the variety and complexity of the agricultural industry here in Fresno and Tulare counties.

There will be plenty to see, hear, smell and taste along the way. While the pace of this tour must be brisk to accommodate the number of stops, I assure you that there will be time for questions, as well as opportunities to deepen your understanding of the many facets you encounter.

I know we'll have fun along the way, and I appreciate the opportunity to get to know all of you better.



Devin Nunes

Ag diversity is Central Valley strength

Since 1948, California has been the nation's top agriculture state in cash receipts. And nowhere is agriculture more significant than the central San Joaquin Valley, where Fresno and Tulare counties top the list in ag production.

In the valley economy, agriculture accounts for more than 21 percent of all income and 25 percent of all employment, according to UC Davis studies.

Even as some commodities struggle from year to year, the region's diverse crops and livestock help maintain its economic strength.

Last year, ag production in Fresno County surpassed \$4 billion for the third consecutive year, with grapes topping



Rep. Devin Nunes, far left, speaks to farmers at the Fresno Fairgrounds about the upcoming Farm Bill. On stage is Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns, Rep. George Radanovich and KMJ ag reporter Roy Isom.

the list in crop dollar value at \$554 million.

Tulare County's ag production surpassed the \$4

billion for the second consecutive year with milk topping the list in crop dollar value at \$1 billion.

Nunes welcomes USDA's Ben Higgins

Congressman Nunes is pleased to welcome Ben Higgins, State Director of USDA Rural Development in California, as this year's Ag Tour Special Guest.

Higgins was appointed as the state director by USDA Secretary Mike Johanns on March 2, 2006. Higgins oversees 140 employees and the operation of the state office in Davis, CA, and 25 local offices, from Eureka to El Centro.

Higgins, formerly served as Executive Vice President of the California Cattlemen's Association (CCA), based in Sacramento, where he was responsible for overseeing all the activities of the asso-



Ben Higgins

ciation. Before assuming his position as Executive Vice President at CCA in December, 2002, he served as Director of Public Affairs for the association. His duties included producer communications and working with federal agencies and legisla-

tors on issues of concern and interest to the beef cattle industry.

Higgins was born and raised in San Luis Obispo, CA, where his family currently operates a fourth-generation commercial cow-calf operation in and around the coastal community of Cayucos.

He graduated from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo in December 2000 with a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Business, concentrating in policy. He completed an internship in Tokyo, Japan before joining CCA.

Ben and his wife, Rochelle, reside in Sacramento.